

EPA News Release

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EPA and Eight Members of Lower Willamette Group Sign Binding Agreement to Launch Portland Harbor Cleanup

***See Second Page for Details on Media Briefing Scheduled for Monday, Oct. 8, at 10:00 am in Portland @ BES offices**

With the stroke of several pens, the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study(RI/FS) has been launched to discover the nature and extent of contamination in Portland Harbor, including the lower reaches of the Willamette river near Portland, Oregon. The EPA and members of the Lower Willamette Group – a coalition of companies and public agencies identified as “potentially responsible parties” in the cleanup process – have signed an Administrative-Order-on-Consent, which is being touted as the first significant step in cleaning up the Harbor. Portland Harbor was named to the National Priorities List in December, 2000.

“This is a landmark deal,” said Ron Kreizenbeck, Acting EPA Regional Administrator in Seattle. “Our negotiations required a new way of thinking to craft a large-scale cleanup partnership that recognizes natural resources, endangered species and tribal concerns over a broad landscape. All this while being sensitive to economic development in a working harbor.”

The Portland Harbor Superfund site is a six-mile reach of the Willamette River between the southern tip of Sauvie Island and Swan Island. The river carries heavy marine traffic and supports a thriving commercial port. A multitude of industrial facilities line the banks on both sides of the river. Private and municipal wastewater outfalls add effluent to Portland Harbor. The Willamette River is an integral feature of the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area, home to over 500,000 people. The harbor is an international portal for commerce and dozens of industries

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located within the site provide economic sustainability to the community. The Lower Willamette is also a popular area for recreation, including fishing and boating. The river provides a critical migratory corridor and rearing habitat for salmon and steelhead, including endangered runs of steelhead and chinook. The area holds great importance to several tribes as a natural and cultural resource.

Activities which have degraded the river include hazardous waste and petroleum product storage; marine construction; oil gasification operations; wood treating; agricultural chemical production; chlorine production; ship loading, maintenance, and repair; and rail car manufacturing. These multiple sources of contamination resulted in high levels of hazardous waste in the sediments of the Willamette River. Contaminants come from a variety of point and non-point sources. Some of the primary contaminants found in sediments include polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOC), heavy metals, arsenic, tributyltin (TBT), pesticides such as dichloro-diphenyl-thirchlorethene (DDT) and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons.

*Media Briefing Scheduled

There will be a briefing held for members of the press interested in learning more about the latest development – and the Portland Harbor cleanup in general – on Monday, October 8, 2001 at the Portland Bureau of Environmental Services(BES) office(6543 N. Burlington). The briefing, featuring EPA officials and executives of the Lower Willamette Group, will be held fat 10 AM in the Smith & Bybee rooms. For directions or more information about the briefing, call Barbara Smith @ 208-605-3392.

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